

## CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

24 July 2019

### **COUNCILLOR S BÜTIKOFER - CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES (DEMOCRATIC SERVICES)**

For the period June to July 2019

#### **1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.**

##### **Benefits**

The benefits caseload is continuing to decrease due to residents now having to claim Housing Costs through Universal Credit instead of Housing Benefit. Changes to customer circumstances are continuing to come through in significant volumes and changes to working practices and to system software are being investigated to ensure the impact to the customer is minimised.

The services speed of processing target for change of circumstances is 14 days and current performance is 9 days.

The target for new claims is 20 days and current performance is at 19 days. Although the service is performing within target, it is recognised that this can be improved and ways of doing this are being investigated.

In recognition of emerging priorities from the new administration and the need to realign services to being customer centred, the Benefits service are pursuing ideas to enhance customer service delivery. A significant change is that customers who come into the council offices to make a new claim will be dealt with by a Benefit Officer. The Benefit Officer will take responsibility for the new claim end to end and the customer will be given a single point of contact during the administration of their new claim. This should make the process much more efficient for the customer and the Council.

Benefits are also taking part in a Customer Service survey during July – September for the Revenues and Benefits Services and Customer Services. Work is underway to roll out the survey with a view to utilising feedback to determine how customers would like to be contacted, how they would like to contact the council, and how they would improve customer service at NN. The feedback will help deliver customer service excellence and ensure that as a new Revenues and Benefit software package is procured that this is customer focussed. Benefits are also taking part in a number of site visits across the region to look at various IT options and customer service processes. Feedback from the site visits will be utilised by the project team as part of the procurement decision but also help us improve our customer service

processes generally.

**Democratic Services** – as the initial induction phase draws to a close, the team is working with Member Development Group on capturing feedback on the sessions held so far and on planning additional sessions to ensure that there is a programme in place for skills development that fully reflects the needs of members. The new software system for managing committee documents has been 'live' for 8 weeks and we are beginning to see a reduction in requests for hard copies of documents as members familiarise themselves with the system.

The successful bids for the second round of the Market Towns Initiative were announced at the Cabinet meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> July with £111,657.36 being shared between the four eligible towns. Thank you to the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) for his ongoing hard work in providing the administrative support for this initiative.

**Eastlaw:**

Eastlaw continue to meet their income targets and are busy embedding two new Councils and 123 new parish councils into their new roles. In the past month officers have been briefing members and providing training in all areas of the Council's work as well as dealing with the day to day caseload.

**2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.**

**Benefits:**

Finally, Revenues and Benefits will once again be holding a stall at the Greenbuild event this year to promote the online service which is greener, quicker, and easier for many customers. For each customer signing up to the online service at the event, we are giving away a free tree (donated by CFH), and a free NN hessian bag (donated by Democratic Services). For every sign up at the event we will also be donating a bee friendly plant and seeds to Sidestrand Hall School which have been provided by Kelling Estate. If members are at Greenbuild, please come along to see them and find out about the service.

**Democratic Services:**

An Environment Forum is to take place on 15 August at the Atrium in North Walsham, with the aim of giving residents a chance to work with the Council on key green issues to benefit and protect North Norfolk for the future.

Members of the public can drop in between 2pm – 5pm when Council Members and staff will be on hand to talk about what the Council is looking to do to tackle local and national environmental concerns and what steps it has

already taken to address climate change. A second session will be held from 6pm-8pm and will feature key speakers and a workshop. Please email [democraticservices@north-norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@north-norfolk.gov.uk) if they wish to attend the evening event. Refreshments will be provided.